Polystyrene–Poly(propylene imine) Dendrimers: Synthesis, Characterization, and Association Behavior of a New Class of Amphiphiles


Abstract: A new class of amphiphilic macromolecules has successfully been synthesized by creating well-defined diblock copolymers of polystyrene (PS, $M_n = 3.2 \times 10^5, M_w/M_n = 1.04$) with poly(propylene imine) dendrimers. A polystyrene core molecule with a primary amine end-group was prepared by a quantitative three-step modification procedure of acid-functionalized polystyrene. On this core molecule, five different generations from PS-dendr-$\text{NH}_2$ up to PS-dendr-(NH$_2$)$_{12}$ were constructed in high yields.

The molecular structure of the block copolymers was analyzed in detail with NMR and IR spectroscopy and electrospray mass spectrometry. With conductivity measurements and monolayer pressure–area isotherm determinations, we observed generation-dependent amphiphilic behavior. Dynamic light scattering and transmission electron microscopy showed that amphiphilic geometry had a distinct effect on aggregation behavior; this is in qualitative agreement with Israelachvili’s theory. Critical association concentrations determined with the pyrene probe luminescence technique were as low as $5 \times 10^{-7} \text{mol}$. The amphiphiles presented here, therefore, show a resemblance to traditional block copolymers with regard to size and stability, and are similar to surfactants with respect to tuning of the shape.

Introduction

The physical behavior of amphiphilic block copolymers is an area which is still not well understood, though extensively investigated.[1] This partly due to the large number of parameters that influence aggregation. Another problem, which makes research in this field even more difficult, is the fact that polymer systems are not as well-defined as traditional surfactants.[2] To be able to investigate the applicability of theoretical models based on the behavior of low molecular weight surfactants[3] to polymeric systems, it is necessary to synthesize new, better-defined amphiphilic structures.[4] Dendrimers are a type of molecules that can make a positive contribution to a better understanding of the structure–property relationship in amphiphiles. These well-defined, highly branched macromolecules have acquired a growing scientific interest as building blocks in new molecular architectures.[5] They have been applied, for example, in unimolecular micelles and structures containing dendrimers and linear macromolecules,[6] Chapman’s hydramphiphiles[7] and the amphiphilic polymers described by Zhong and Eisenberg,[8] which can be regarded as the first approach toward polystyrene–dendrimer structures with variable polar headgroup size, already show the versatility of the introduction of dendrimers into amphiphilic molecules. Recently, we have reported hybrid polystyrene–dendrimer block copolymers that fill the gap between the low molecular weight surfactants and amphiphilic polymers.[9] These structures show generation-dependent aggregation behavior, which is consistent with Israelachvili’s theory. Critical association concentrations determined for the pyrene probe luminescence technique were as low as $5 \times 10^{-7} \text{mol}$. The amphiphiles presented here, therefore, show a resemblance to traditional block copolymers with regard to size and stability, and are similar to surfactants with respect to tuning of the shape.

Results and Discussion

Synthesis of the core molecule: In order to grow poly(propylene imine) dendrimers on polystyrene by the divergent method, well-defined primary-amine-functionalized polystyrene had to be prepared as the core molecule. The anionic polymerization technique was chosen for the preparation of polystyrene (PS) because of the control over molecular weight and end-group functionalization. In a first approach, direct amination was
investigated with N-trimethylsilylbenzalidimine as end-cap reagent. However, no quantitative modification was obtained. Furthermore, a model study with z-methyl benzylamine, which resembles the PS chain-end after functionalization, showed that a double Michael addition onto the primary amine function suffered from severe steric hindrance. Therefore, an indirect amination procedure was developed, as is depicted in Scheme 1. In this procedure a standard quantitative end-cap reaction with CO₂ was used and a spacer was created between polystyrene and the primary amine function. Anionic polymerization was performed on the 100 g scale under a 2.5 bar N₂ atmosphere, with sec-BuLi as initiator and cyclohexane as solvent. Quantitative introduction of the acid function was possible with a slightly modified literature procedure, addition of THF and CO₂ to the reaction mixture resulted in the formation of 5% polystyrene dimer from reaction of two polystyryl amions with the same CO₂ molecule. Therefore, the living polymer solution was siphoned into a THF solution saturated with CO₂, and complete modification was achieved. The polystyrene-COOH (PS-COOH, 1, Scheme 1) obtained, with M₅ of 3–8 × 10³ g mol⁻¹ and Mᵣ/M₅ values around 1.05, could be quantitatively reduced to the corresponding alcohol (PS-COH, 2) with LiAlH₄. PS-CH₂OH was cyanoethylated with acrylonitrile, followed by hydrogenation of the nitrile to a primary amine. The cyanoethylation step in this reaction scheme is a modification of the method developed by Percec for the preparation of nitric-functionalized poly(isobutylene).[13]

Cyanoethylation reactions to obtain PS-C₂H₅OCH₂CH₂CN (3) were performed in a two-phase system of toluene NH₄OH₄₄, to which a phase-transfer catalyst was added. Toluene was necessary to solubilize PS-CH₂OH, and the combination of NaOH and phase-transfer catalyst made it possible to introduce a base in the organic phase that was strong enough to catalyze the Michael addition of acrylonitrile onto the alcohol function. Cyanoethylation reactions were quantitative in 30 min for all of the molecular weights tested. Of key importance in this reaction was the use of the combination of NaOH and the phase-transfer catalyst trioctylmethylammonium chloride (TOMA). Experiments with other base systems such as the organic base DBU, and the phase-transfer catalyst tetrabutylammonium hydroxide (TBAH) reacted very slowly and not quantitatively (Table 1). The method based on TOMA was rather robust: the excess of acrylonitrile or the amounts of TOMA and NaOH could be varied over a broad range without changing the reactivity or yield of the reaction. Only when more than 40 equiv of NaOH were added did dicyanoethyl ether become a significant by-product and the yield drop to 80%.

A problem occurred during the workup of the reaction mixture containing the higher molecular weight polystyrene. When the mixture was concentrated before precipitation, PS-C₂H₅OCH₂CH₂CN with M₅ = 8 × 10³ g mol⁻¹ showed considerable retro-Michael reaction. By adjusting the procedure and precipitating the mixture directly into methanol, no traces of retro-Michael reaction could be detected. Moreover, at this point separation of PS-CH₂OH, and PS-C₂H₅OCH₂CH₂CN was, if necessary, readily performed by flash chromatography. The extent of reaction could easily be followed with TLC, while IR, ¹H NMR, and ¹³C NMR spectra provided unambiguous evidence of the formation of PS-C₂H₅OCH₂CH₂CN, even for the higher molecular weight polystyrenes.

The hydrogenation of the nitrile function to a primary amine was a modification of the method described for poly(propylene imine) dendrimer synthesis. Modifications that had to be made were a change of solvent to toluene/CH₃OH 3/1 v/v to dissolve PS-C₂H₅OCH₂CH₂CN and the application of longer reaction times. The use of NH₃ was of great importance for a successful hydrogenation. Without NH₃, yields after workup did not exceed 50%, whereas with NH₃ yields >90% could be obtained. NH₃ also had a positive effect on the reaction rate. The disappearance of the CN signal (at 2252 cm⁻¹) observed with IR spectroscopy was a suitable method for following the hydrogenation reaction. The primary amine stretching vibration was somewhat obscured by the H₂O absorption band, but was clearly visible for PS-C₂H₅OCH₂CH₂NH₂ (4). TLC proved to be another method with which the reaction could be followed. ¹H NMR and ¹³C NMR spectroscopy excluded side reactions, and the combination of these techniques made it possible to identify the reaction product as PS-C₂H₅OCH₂CH₂NH₂. No purification procedure was necessary. The only loss of material resulted from some adsorption of polymer onto the catalyst. Yields of the hydrogenation reaction therefore amounted to 90%.

The choice of the base system for the cyanoethylation reaction is not straightforward. The difference in reactivity of polyethylene oxide and polystyrene toward acrylonitrile in the presence of Lewatite resin can be explained by a large difference in polarity between the polymers: the alcohol functionality of PS-CH₂OH is shielded too much by the polystyrene chain. The organic base used, DBU, on the other hand, is not strong enough to deprotonate the alcohol. TOMA, as a phase-transfer catalyst, is able to introduce sufficient OH⁻ into the chemical environment of the hydroxyl function of polystyrene to obtain the alkoxide form, and makes the Michael reaction possible. The choice of phase-transfer catalyst (PTC) is also critical, as can be shown from the lower modification results with TBAH. An explanation could be the lower availability of OH⁻ in this case. Cyanoethylation of a polymeric alcohol has already been

![Scheme 1. Modification of polystyrene for the introduction of a primary amine function.](image-url)
described for polyisobutylene$^{[113]}$. In this case too a PTC (Triton B) was necessary to give quantitative results. Although longer reaction times are reported for the cyanoethylation of polyisobutylene, it is not clear whether this results from a significant difference in reactivity. In our group the same system as that described in this paper has been used for poly(phenylene ether) (PPE)$^{[114]}$, thereby showing the versatility of the developed method.

NH$_3$ plays a crucial role in the hydrogenation of the nitrile function. It causes a fast exchange of nitrile and amine end-groups on the catalyst, thereby increasing the availability of the active sites and enhancing the reaction rate. This desorption also results in higher yields after workup, because a smaller amount of polymer remains attached to the catalyst surface. Furthermore, NH$_3$ prevents undesired coupling reactions between intermediate secondary amines and PS-CH$_2$OCH$_2$CH$_2$NH$_2$. Also the intermediate acid, alcohol, and nitrile can be used for a variety of reactions onto polystyrene. Therefore, this method can be seen as a good alternative to direct amination procedures.

Synthesis of PS-dendr-(NH$_2$)$_n$ with $n = 1-32$ and PS-dendr-(CN)$_n$ with $n = 2-32$: To obtain polystyrene-poly(propylene imine) block copolymers, the divergent dendrimer synthesis was performed onto PS-CH$_2$OCH$_2$CH$_2$NH$_2$ core molecules with $M_r = 3.2 \times 10^3 \ \text{g mol}^{-1}$ (based on gel permeation chromatography (GPC) of PS-Ch$_2$OH), as is depicted in Scheme 2. The reaction sequence, consisting of a double Michael addition of acrylonitrile onto primary amines, followed by Raney cobalt-catalyzed heterogeneous hydrogenation of the nitriles to amines, has proven to be a very efficient and simple procedure for the preparation of dendrimers on a large scale when 1,4-diaminobutane is used as core molecule. The change from 1,4-diaminobutane to PS-CH$_2$OCH$_2$CH$_2$NH$_2$, in combination with the developing amphiphilic character of the intermediates, required adjustment and optimization of both cyanoethylation and hydrogenation steps of the dendrimer reaction sequence compared with the 1,4-diaminobutane route. For the cyanoethylation, the choice of solvent combination was of considerable importance. The first reaction step toward PS-dendr-(CN)$_2$ (5) was possible in acrylonitrile as reactive solvent; the other reactions had to be performed in a heterogeneous system of toluene/water. Acetic acid was used as catalyst in all cases. To obtain stable emulsions, the water-to-toluene ratio had to be adjusted for each cyanoethylation step.

Hydrogenations were performed under conditions that were similar to the poly(propylene imine) dendrimer synthesis with 1,4-diaminobutane as core molecule, under 80 bar H$_2$ pressure and with Raney cobalt as catalyst. However, also in this case the solvent had to be changed to a toluene/MeOH 3:1 v/v mixture in order to dissolve the products. Furthermore, as was also noticed for the hydrogenation of PS-CH$_2$OCH$_2$CH$_2$CN, the addition of NH$_3$ was of utmost importance. Without NH$_3$ it was impossible to hydrogenate fully even PS-dendr-(CN)$_4$ (7).

Scheme 2. Synthetic route toward PS-dendr-(NH$_2$)$_{32}$: i) Cyanoethylation with acrylonitrile in water/toluene, catalyzed by acetic acid; ii) hydrogenation at 80 bar H$_2$ pressure with Raney cobalt as catalyst.
Side reactions occurred as intramolecular bridging between a primary amine and an imine function took place, and the yields after workup were drastically decreased when no NH₃ was used. NH₃ made it possible to circumvent these problems. When hydrogenations were performed on a small scale (< 1 g), serious cobalt contamination and carbamate formation were observed. Performing the workup under N₂ atmosphere prevented the latter problem. When the reactions were performed on a larger scale (> 5 g) neither problem occurred. All nitrite and amine products, with the exception of PS-dendr-(NH₂)₁₂ (14), could be purified by precipitation techniques. The polarity of the medium that was used for precipitation had to be increased as the number of generations increased, from MeOH to ammonia. PS-dendr-(NH₂)₃₂ was too polar to be precipitated even in ammonia. Column-chromatographic purification of the nitrile intermediates was possible up to PS-dendr-(CN)₁₆ (11). With this technique, side products such as poly(acrylonitrile) and acetylated PS–CH₂OCH₂CH₂CH₂NH₂ could easily be removed. All of the products were obtained in good yields after workup.

The cyanoethylation experiments demonstrate the development of amphiphilicity of the molecules. Because the Michael addition is performed at the interface of the water/toluene mixture, stability of the emulsion is important. The increasing polarity of the dendrimer with increasing generation made it necessary to add more water to the system. During reaction, it was difficult to follow the cyanoethylation, either with TLC or with spectroscopic techniques. This is a result of the formation of protonated dendritic structures owing to the presence of HOAc. Optimization of the reaction time was therefore difficult. Column chromatography made it possible to separate a number of side products from the desired dendritic structures. The difference in polarity between amine- and nitrile-functionalized dendrimers is large, and incompletely cyanoethylated structures could therefore be removed. However, it was not possible to remove side products in which, for example, one of the 16 amine functions had not reacted. After optimization, the cyanoethylation reactions could be performed quantitatively, and column chromatographic purifications were therefore not necessary most of the time.

The role of NH₃ during hydrogenation, as earlier observed for the preparation of PS–CH₂OCH₂CH₂CH₂NH₂, is a crucial but also a fairly well-known one. One of the major side reactions that can occur during dendrimer synthesis is the intramolecular bridging reaction between an imine and a primary amine function, with the release of NH₃ (Scheme 3). NH₃ is thought to compete with the primary amines in attack on the intermediate imine. The attack of NH₃ leads to the formation of the desired amine.

Especially in the case of the hydrogenations, the scale of reaction was important. Precipitation and filtration techniques could be performed more effectively at larger scales, with the result that cobalt was removed and carbamate formation could be prevented. The hydrogenation step was the most difficult to control in the reaction sequence and could give rise to by-products. These by-products could not be separated from the desired product with column chromatography because of the high polarity of both materials. In the multistep divergent dendrimer synthesis it was therefore almost impossible to completely prevent formation of side products or to isolate the pure product. The divergent synthesis can in this respect be regarded as the polymeric approach toward dendrimers. On the other hand, to obtain the end product a 13-step synthesis had to be performed onto a polymer in a well-defined manner. This makes this procedure an unprecedented effort in the area of polymer modification reactions.

Characterization of PS-dendr-(NH₂)ₙ with n = 1–32 and PS-dendr-(CN)ₙ with n = 2–32: The process of hydrogenation could be followed very well by means of IR spectroscopy. The disappear-
was clearly noticed for the resonances of the carbons next to the tertiary amines (around δ = 50) and the carbons in between the tertiary amines (around δ = 25). Even single carbons were visible (C^3 and C^4). The signals of the carbon atoms next to the ether function (C^1 and C^2) were much broader, owing to the effect of tauticity of the polymer backbone. The signals that are not numbered in the 13C NMR spectrum originate from the sec-butyl group. All of the other 13C NMR spectra could be assigned likewise; solubility problems occurred only in the case of PS-dendr-(NH2)32, and characterization with NMR spectroscopy became very difficult. In this case, only the PS chains were visible in CDCl3. After storage of the PS-dendr-(NH2)32 foam for 2 months, the product had become insoluble, even in DMSO. After an extraction process with water and toluene a product was obtained that was soluble in organic phases. Again, however, characterization with CDCl3 only showed polystyrene, and other solvents used gave ambiguous results. In the case of PS-dendr-(NH2)32 13C NMR spectroscopy revealed a few very small additional peaks (<5%), which could possibly be related to a side product. Electrospray mass spectrometry was performed on PS-dendr-(NH2)32 (Fig. 2), and the spectrum shows the peaks for m/z with z = 4. The analysis shows at least 17 individual peaks that are all related to the polydispersity of the polystyrene unit (M_n/M_w = 1.04 based on GPC of PS-CH2OH). The calculated M_n = 4020 of PS-dendr-(NH2)32, based on the GPC of PS-CH2OH (M_w = 3200), is very close to the M_w on top (3965) as determined with electrospray mass spectrometry. From the latter, we determined M_w/M_n = 1.02, which is again in good agreement with that estimated from GPC. The “dispersity” of the dendrimer block is, however, of a totally different order than the dispersity of the well-defined polystyrene chain; only a small imperfection of the dendrimer head-group (peaks at m/z = 953.1 and 979.3, z = 4) is seen.

Although electrospray mass spectrometry is a very powerful technique for analysis of synthesized products, it is also a quite complex characterization method, still under development. Sample preparation and interface techniques especially need meticulous optimization in order to measure samples satisfactorily. Furthermore, the polydispersity of “normal” polymers hampers detailed analysis of the small defects in the dendrimer part. Characterization with NMR spectroscopy therefore remains the most frequently used technique for our block copolymers. With this analysis method no imperfections can be detected for the nitrile intermediates and the strafified structure of the dendrimers becomes perfectly clear. An approximation of the resolution of 13C NMR spectroscopy is demonstrated by the fact that OCH2CH2CH2N is visible; the limit of detection is below 5%. One very important aspect of NMR characterization is that every intermediate has to be fully characterized. The very small amounts of impurities or side products that were noticed for PS-dendr-(NH2)32 are no longer visible for the higher generations. Because of the symmetry of the dendrimers, these imperfections are camouflaged, because the chemical environments of the imperfections and the correct structure become almost identical. The preparation of PS-dendr-(NH2)32 proves to be a reaction at the limits of the synthetic possibilities. From IR spectroscopy it can be concluded that approximately one out of 32 nitrile functions has not been hydrogenated. The NMR characterization difficulties are partly a result of the amphiphilic character; the dendrimer head-groups are aggregated in and shielded from deuterated solvents such as CDCl3. Storage of PS-dendr-(NH2)32 as a solid gives rise to an intermolecular bridging process that results in an insoluble material. Although this process is not observed for the other generations, it is sometimes noticed for the poly(propylene imine) dendrimers. However, samples that were freshly prepared from PS-dendr-(NH2)32 for aggregation and amphiphile behavior were not affected by intermolecular bridging and their properties were hardly influenced by the probably incompletely hydrogenated structures. From the characterization results it can be concluded that our aim, obtaining a well-defined series of polystyrene-poly(propylene imine) dendrimer diblock copolymers, has been accomplished quite successfully, and has brought us to the limits of the present synthetic and characterization possibilities.

**Amphiphilic behavior of PS-dendr-(NH2)32**

The development of amphiphilic and aggregation behavior as a function of dendrimer generation of PS-dendr-(NH2)32 was studied with five different techniques: the amphiphilic character at a toluene/water interface was investigated with conductivity measurements, and at a water/air interface with monolayer experiments. Dynamic light scattering (DLS) and transmission electron microscopy (TEM) were used to examine the aggregates formed by the different generations in aqueous solutions, while the critical association concentrations were determined with the pyrene probe luminescence technique.

**Conductivity measurements:** To a stirred 3 × 10^-4 M dispersion of PS-dendr-(NH2)32 in a 0.01 M KCl solution, a 3 × 10^-4 M amphoteric solution in toluene was added dropwise. By measuring the conductivity of the system as a function of the toluene water ratio, it could be estimated whether toluene or water was the continuous phase. At the point where the conductivity dropped to zero, the phase inversion point was reached and toluene became the dispersing phase. The effect of dendrimer generation
on the position of this inversion point was investigated with PS-dendr-(NH₂)₄ for n = 2 - 16. PS-dendr-(NH₂)₁₂ could not be measured in the same manner, because it proved to be insoluble in toluene. The conductivity measurements show a distinct difference between PS-dendr-(NH₂)₁₆ and the lower generations. For PS-dendr-(NH₂)₄ with n = 2 - 8 there is a strong tendency to stabilize toluene as the continuous phase. PS-dendr-(NH₂)₁₂ (6) even showed a remarkable phase inversion at 2 vol% of toluene. This can be explained by the fact that polystyrene is the dominant part in the amphiphilic structure and, according to the empirical rules of Bancroft, the organic phase as continuous phase is preferred. PS-dendr-(NH₂)₁₆ (12) is a much more balanced amphiphile and is therefore equally capable of stabilizing toluene or water as dispersing phase.

**Monolayer experiments:** Amphiphilic behavior at an air/water interface was studied by means of monolayer experiments. Surface pressure–area isotherms were recorded for PS-dendr-(NH₂)₄ with n = 1 - 16. The monolayers formed were also investigated with a Brewster angle microscope (BAM) which made it possible to investigate the type of structures that are formed in the monolayer. The results are shown in Figure 3.

![Figure 3](image-url)

**Critical association concentrations:** Many techniques can be used for the determination of critical association concentrations (cac’s); however, not all of them are sensitive enough to detect the onset of aggregation if this occurs at very low concentrations. Since the cac’s of block copolymers are usually much lower than those of low molecular mass surfactants, we used pyrene as a fluorescent probe and calculated the effective cac’s from the changes in the spectral characteristics of pyrene as a function of surfactant concentration. If we represent the intensity of the emission spectrum as a function of the block copolymer concentration, we obtain cac’s directly. From the excitation spectra we obtain cac’s by representing the ratio I₃₄₀/I₃₃₅ vs log C. The experimental results for PS-dendr-(NH₂)₄ with n = 8 and 16 obtained from excitation spectra are shown in Figure 4.

![Figure 4](image-url)

**Dynamic Light Scattering:** DLS measurements were performed for PS-dendr-(NH₂)₄ (8) in toluene and for PS-dendr-(NH₂)₁₆ (n = 8 to 32) in water. Concentrations of all of the aggregates were 3 × 10⁻⁴ mol L⁻¹. For the aqueous aggregates, turbid systems were obtained, except for PS-dendr-(NH₂)₃₂. PS-dendr-(NH₂)₄ showed single-particle behavior in toluene. A hydrodynamic radius of 3.4 nm could therefore be estimated. The aqueous aggregates were much more difficult to interpret. For PS-dendr-(NH₂)₁₆ complicated structures were observed that could be identified as large threadlike structures with a hydrodynamic radius of 120 nm. This type of aggregation remained unchanged even after extreme dilution. The other structures, however, showed so much clustering of the aggregates that no particle dimensions could be estimated. Dilution of the samples did not improve the results.
Clustering occurs when dendritic head-groups are directed toward the periphery of the aggregates, where they are able to form electrostatic interactions. These interactions are also noticed for the normal polystyrene imine) dendrimers. The fact that even after extreme dilution the aggregates and clusters remain intact means that these intermolecular interactions are very strong. They can only be reduced by modification of the dendrimers or by inverted micellar behavior. This is the case for PS-dendr-(NH$_2$)$_8$, negative staining, spherical micelles, $\times 135,000$. 

Transmission electron microscopy studies: Aqueous aggregates of PS-dendr-(NH$_2$)$_8$, with $n = 8$, 16 and 32 ($3 \times 10^{-4}$ mol L$^{-1}$) were studied with three different TEM techniques: negative staining with uranyl acetate, Pt shadowing, and freeze fracture. All three techniques gave consistent results (Fig. 5): in the case of PS-dendr-(NH$_2$)$_8$, flexible bilayers were formed. PS-dendr-(NH$_2$)$_8$ showed rodlike micelles with a diameter of 12 nm, and PS-dendr-(NH$_2$)$_8$ gave spherical micelles with diameters between 10 - 20 nm. For this last sample no freeze-fracture results could be obtained. Acidification of PS-dendr-(NH$_2$)$_8$ from pH $= 7$ to pH $= 1$ did not influence the aggregation type. Furthermore, after 4 weeks the same aggregates were still observed for PS-dendr-(NH$_2$)$_8$.

The observed diameters of rodlike and spherical micelles are of the same order of magnitude as would be expected for a bilayer of the diblock copolymers. With respect to clustering and stability of aggregates, TEM is consistent with the DLS measurements. The stability of the aggregates formed is remarkable: spherical micelles can be made visible with the TEM techniques used. The well-known transition behavior for simple amphiphiles from micellar cylinders to micelles upon dilution is not observed in this case. The aggregates formed of PS-dendr-(NH$_2$)$_8$ are shown to be stable over time for at least a month. This structure also shows pH-independent behavior. This can be explained by the fact that at pH $= 7$ the primary amines are already partly protonated, so that a change to lower pH does not have a drastic effect on head-group charge and size.

**Discussion**

The results obtained with both TEM and DLS are in perfect qualitative agreement withIsraelachvili’s theory on surfactant assembly. He postulates that the geometry of the amphiphile determines what kind of aggregates are formed, using the packing parameter $P = V(\alpha_0 \times l_0)$, in which $V = \text{apolar chain volume}$, $\alpha_0 = \text{head-group area}$ and $l_0 = \text{chain length}$. Starting with a small head-group compared with the chain, inverted micelles are to be expected.

With increasing head-group size, aggregates change from planar bilayers through vesicles and rodlike micelles to spherical micelles. This process is exactly what is observed going from PS-dendr-(NH$_2$)$_8$ to PS-dendr-(NH$_2$)$_8$. Changing head-group size and not the chemical nature of the amphiphilic structures is only possible with dendrimers and results in proof for Israelachvili’s theory of shape-dependent aggregation behavior. A model for traditional surfactants is now qualitatively applicable for this special kind of amphiphilic block copolymers.

For a quantitative comparison with Israelachvili’s theory, knowledge of dendrimer head-group size, chain length and volume are necessary. The head-group areas, determined with monolayer techniques, are known for PS-dendr-(NH$_2$)$_8$ with $n = 8$, 16. The volume of the chain can be estimated from the Van der Waals volume of a styrene unit (63 cm$^3$ mol$^{-1}$). For 30 units this results in a volume of 1897.5 cm$^3$ mol$^{-1}$.$^{31}$ From these values the packing parameter $P$ can be calculated, with 6 nm as chain length (estimated from the TEM pictures). From preset values of $P$ the corresponding $l_0$ can be calculated (Table 2).

Both methods show a large discrepancy between what is calculated and what is expected based on theory. An explanation may be that for block copolymers this theory is oversimplified and corrections have to be made for the strongly differing entropic factors when polymers are compared with small organic molecules. Furthermore, although a random coil conformation can be expected for atactic polystyrene, phase separation can give rise to extended chain conformations and therefore it is very difficult to estimate the exact chain dimensions. The fact that a perfect qualitative agreement is found, however, proves that the basic theory.
Tabic 2. Quantitative validation of Israelachvili's theory.

<table>
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<th>Product</th>
<th>$P_{\text{nuc}}$</th>
<th>$l_c$ calc. [Å]</th>
<th>$P$ calc. [Å]</th>
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<td>PS-dendr-(NH$_2$)$_3$</td>
<td>0.50–1.00</td>
<td>7.2±14</td>
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<tr>
<td>PS-dendr-(NH$_2$)$_3$$_2$</td>
<td>0.33–0.50</td>
<td>11.1±17</td>
<td>0.09</td>
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</tbody>
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[a] Calculated with $I = 1897.5$ cm$^{-1}$. [b] Calculated with $l_c = 6$ nm.

critical ideas of Israelachvili's model are correct and universally applicable.

By comparing the polystyrene–poly(propylene imine) dendrimer amphiphiles with low molecular weight surfactants and traditional amphiphilic block copolymers, it becomes clear that our structures combine properties of both. A feature shared with surfactants is the ability to change the type of aggregation by adjusting amphiphile geometry. For surfactants this is a well-known phenomenon, and forms the basis of Israelachvili's theory.$^{[30]}$ Changes in aggregation type can also be induced by solubilization.$^{[31,32]}$ varying the concentration.$^{[33]}$ or changing the ratio in mixed systems.$^{[34]}$ For amphiphilic block copolymers the possibilities are much more restricted. The main aggregation form is the spherical micelle, whereas some anomalous behavior is reported that leads to metastable wormlike micelles$^{[35]}$ or ellipsoidal structures.$^{[36]}$ For polystyrene–poly(ethylene oxide)–polystyrene triblock copolymers a change from spherical to rodlike micelles on increasing the temperature is reported.$^{[37]}$ By means of polymerizable surfactants or polymers with amphiphilic side chains, it is possible to obtain a broader variety of aggregation types.$^{[38]}$ However, this is a different class of amphiphiles, for which the aggregate consists mostly of one polymer, and of which the composition is less well-defined. Variation of aggregation within a series of block copolymers is observed for two-dimensional self-assembly of a polystyrene–peralkylated poly(vinyl pyridine) block copolymer.$^{[39]}$ On addition of polystyrene homopolymer different structures, varying from rings to spherical micelles, were observed. Varying the ratio of block lengths of a polystyrene–polysoprene diblock copolymer resulted in different aggregation types in the solid phase, from lamellar structures to the so-called ordered bicontinuous double diamond morphology.$^{[40]}$ An increase in head–group size of the polystyrene–poly(propylene imine) dendrimer amphiphiles induced phase separation in the bulk, which could be seen in the fourth and fifth generation. The solid-phase morphology of these molecules is still unknown. Changing three-dimensional solvated aggregates by tuning the geometry as observed for our structures, however, is a new feature for block copolymers.

An advantage that our systems share with block copolymers is the stability of the aggregates formed. The strong interactions between the polymers in the core of the structure$^{[41]}$ makes it possible to observe micelles with TEM$^{[39]}$ and GPC.$^{[42]}$ The very low deaggregation rate was also observed by Riess et al. for block copolymers used in emulsion polymerization.$^{[43]}$ For our structures, stability is also proven by the techniques mentioned above and by the fact that on dilution no change occurs in aggregation type. This also points in the direction of low critical association concentration (cac) values. The cac values found are comparable to those of traditional block copolymer systems. Our systems therefore offer very interesting possibilities of use as stabilizers for vesicle and emulsion polymerization.

Polystyrene–poly(propylene imine) dendrimers can further contribute to a better understanding of aggregation behavior of amphiphilic block copolymers, because the polar part of our molecules is as well-defined as a polymer can be, and heterogeneity of the structures, which can sometimes affect amphiphilic behavior,$^{[44]}$ is very much diminished.

Conclusions

It is possible to prepare a new series of amphiphilic diblock copolymers by a divergent poly(propylene imine) dendrimer synthesis onto a primary amine functionalized polystyrene core molecule. Every intermediate of this 10-step reaction procedure can be characterized in great detail. Study of the behavior of these amphiphiles at toluene/water and air/water interfaces clearly demonstrates the development of amphiphility with increasing generation. The change of aggregation type from inverted micellar structures for PS-dendr-(NH$_2$)$_3$ through vesicles and rodlike micelles to spherical micelles for PS-dendr-(NH$_2$)$_3$$_2$ is in qualitative agreement with the theory of Israelachvili concerning surfactant assembly. The amphiphiles described in this paper are similar in shape but different in size compared with traditional surfactants, while similar in size but different in shape compared with traditional block copolymers. This new class of amphiphiles can therefore contribute to a better understanding of the relation between molecular structure and amphiphilic properties.

Experimental Procedure

General procedures: 1H NMR and 13C NMR spectra were recorded on a Bruker AM-400 spectrometer at 400.13 and 100.62 MHz, respectively. All $\delta$ values are given relative to tetramethylsilane. Infrared spectra were prepared according to the K Br technique and were measured on a Perkin–Elmer 1600 FT. GPC analyses were performed on a Waters 590 GPC with a PL–GEL 525 column and THF as eluent, and with a Spectra physics GPC, with Visospect H 502 and Shodex RI71 detectors, equipped with two PL–GEL mixed-C 30 cm columns, and with CHCl$_3$ as eluent. TLC was performed with Merck 60 F$_{254}$ silica gel plates, and compounds were visualized with $I$, vapor or under UV light ($\lambda = 254$ nm). Column chromatography was performed with Merck silica gel 60, 70–230 mesh ASTM. Flash chromatography was performed with Merck silica gel 60, 230–400 mesh ASTM.

Glassware was kept in a stove at 150 °C before use. THF p.a. was distilled from Na/benzophenone; DMF was distilled and stored on molecular sieves (3 Å). All other solvents (p.a. quality) and reagents were used without further purification, except for CHCl$_3$, (chemical purity), o-hexane (distilled before use) and methanol used for preparations (technical grade).

Anionic polymerization: A 1.5 L BEP 280 Büchi glass reactor was used for the large-scale anionic polymerization. The reactor was evacuated at 60 °C and purged with nitrogen prior to use. Reactions were carried out under 2.5 bar N$_2$ pressure. Nitrogen was purified over a column filled with activated BTS catalyst to remove O$_2$, followed by a column of molecular sieves (3 Å) to remove traces of H$_2$O. Styrene was purified at –18 °C over a column filled with Al$_2$O$_3$ granulates, and stored in a storage vessel under nitrogen pressure at 4 °C. Cyclohexane was purified over a column of molecular sieves (3 Å) and stored under nitrogen. n-Butyllithium (1.3 M solution in cyclohexane $n$-hexane 92/8 v/v) and CO$_2$ were used as purchased.

Dendrimer synthesis: A Parr reactor, type 4561 (300 mL), equipped with 4642 controller was used for the hydrogenation reactions. Raney cobalt (Grace) was kindly provided by DSM.

BSC measurements were performed on a Perkin–Elmer TAS 7 DX, with a heating rate of 40 °C min$^{-1}$.

Monolayer experiments were performed in a home-built trough maintained at room temperature ($140–210$ mm). The surface pressure was measured by means of Willimy plates mounted on a Trans–Tek transducer (Connecticus, USA). The surface of compressed monolayers was studied with a Brewster angle microscope (NFT BAM-1), equipped with a 10 mW He–Ne laser with a beam diameter of 0.68 mm, operating at 632.8 nm. Reflections were detected with a CCD camera. On the subphase (Milli-Q water) 50–150 μL of a solution of the amphiphiles in CHCl$_3$ was spread and allowed to evaporate. The rate of compression was 7.0 cm$^2$ min$^{-1}$.

Conductivity measurements were performed in a heterogeneous toluene/water system, with a CDM 83 conductivity meter and a Philips conductivity cell PW 9550. The cell constant was 0.872 cm$^{-1}$; calibrations used 0.1 M and 0.01 M KCl solutions. Measurements were performed at room temperature. A 0.01 M KCl solution (20 mL) in which 3.3 x 10$^{-4}$ M amphiphile was dispersed was the starting point of the measurements. To this mixture a 3.3 x 10$^{-4}$ M amphiphile solution in toluene was added dropwise. The conductivity was measured continuously.

Critical association concentrations: Steady-state fluorescence spectra were run in a Perkin–Elmer luminescence spectrometer LS50B in right-angle geometry (90° collecting optics) with slit openings of 5 nm for emission and 2.5 nm for excitation. 1 cm square quartz cells were filled with $\pm 3$ mL solution [Py] = 4.8 x 10$^{-5}$ M.
For fluorescence emission spectra \( \lambda_{ex} \) was 339 nm, for excitation spectra \( \lambda_{em} \) was 390 nm. The block copolymer was dissolved in an emulsion of tetrahydrofuran and water while being shaken. After removal of the organic solvent in a rotary evaporator at 35 °C, a stock solution of the polymer in water was obtained. All samples were prepared in a 100 mL volumetric flask (25 mL). After addition of 50 mL warm water (25 °C), the organic solvents were evaporated and stable aggregates of \( 3 \times 10^{-5} \text{ mol L}^{-1} \) were formed. A droplet of the sample was placed on a Cu grid, covered with formvar, and allowed to dry for 1 min, after which the droplet was removed. Negative staining was performed by addition of a droplet of a 2 wt% uranyl acetate solution over 15 s.
P-S-shadowed samples were prepared by covering the droplet with P-labeled Sputter unit. Freeze-fractured samples were prepared by addition of a droplet of the amphiphile dispersion onto a gold microscope grid (150 mesh), placing this between two copper plates and fixed in supercooled liquid nitrogen. Sample holder were placed in a Balzers freeze-electching system. The samples were then freeze-dried. The process was confirmed by TLC. IR. 1H NMR and 13C NMR. DSC: \( T_m = 77.9 \) °C. 1H NMR (CDCl3): \( \delta = 0.73 \) (6 H, C(CH3)(CH2)Ph). 6.25 7.32 ((CH2CHPh)n), 118.7 (2C, CN) 124.1 127.0 (br, CH(CH3)(CH2)Ph), 127.0 129.5 (br, CH(CH3)(CH2)Ph), 145.1 146.5 (br, CH(CH3)(CH2)Ph), : IR: \( \nu_{\text{em}} = 3533 \text{ cm}^{-1} \).

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Amphiphilic Dendrimers

**Table 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compound</th>
<th>Formula</th>
<th>Molecular Weight</th>
<th>pKa</th>
<th>Density</th>
<th>Solubility</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CH3</strong></td>
<td>CH2CH2CH2CH2CH2CH2CH2CH2</td>
<td>120.26</td>
<td>7.25</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>Very soluble in water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C6H13</strong></td>
<td>C6H12O6</td>
<td>104.17</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>Soluble in many organic solvents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C10H22</strong></td>
<td>C10H18O6</td>
<td>190.34</td>
<td>5.85</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>Moderately soluble in water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C14H26</strong></td>
<td>C14H22O6</td>
<td>252.42</td>
<td>6.30</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>Insoluble in water</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:**
- **CH3** represents methyl groups.
- **C6H13** represents hexyl groups.
- **C10H22** represents decyl groups.
- **C14H26** represents tetradecyl groups.
- **C6H12O6** represents hexane-1,2,4,6-tetraol.
- **C10H18O6** represents decane-1,2,4,6-tetraol.
- **C14H22O6** represents tetradecane-1,2,4,6-tetraol.

**References:**

**Abstract:**
This paper presents a comprehensive study of amphiphilic dendrimers, focusing on their synthesis, self-assembly, and applications. The dendrimers were designed to exhibit amphiphilic properties, allowing them to form stable micelles in aqueous solutions. Key findings include the optimization of dendrimer architecture for enhanced solubility and stability, as well as the evaluation of their biological and material properties. The results highlight the potential of these materials in various applications, such as drug delivery, imaging, and catalysis.
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